

The Children's House

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY267314
Inspection date	14 February 2008
Inspector	Miriam Sheila Brown
Setting Address	The Pavillion, Park Hill Recreation Ground, Benmead Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 2DA
Telephone number	01865 724826 office 01865 377759 school
E-mail	henrietta@usser.co.uk
Registered person	Henrietta Portia Ussher
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Children's House Nursery was first registered in September 1997 and moved to its current location in September 2003. It is a Montessori nursery and operates from a pavilion on a public recreation ground, within walking distance from the centre of Kidlington, Oxfordshire. A large room is available for the majority of activities with a small side room, kitchen, office and toilet area to one side. The small room and kitchen are used for specific small group activities. A public activity area is used for outdoor play. This is located at the rear of the building and has a fence and gate to aid security.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 24 children at any one time and is open five days a week, during school terms, between 08:30 and 15:30. There are currently 19 children aged between two and five years on the register. Of these, 12 receive funding for early years education. There are currently no children with additional needs who attend the nursery and one who speaks English as an additional language. The nursery employs three members of staff all of whom are Montessori trained.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's physical development is very well supported through a wide range of planned activities which assist in their small and large muscle development. They play outside each day using wheeled toys and other equipment, such as a climbing frame, bats and balls. In the summer months activities are moved outside. Inside children enjoy using a wide range of tools and resources which support their small muscle development, such as small construction, painting, threading, cutting, drawing, small pincers and a computer mouse. All aspects of physical development are enhanced through weekly dance sessions with a peripatetic teacher.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times. There is scope to develop this awareness prior to children using the free-flow snack table. Staff maintain accident and medication records effectively and have received first aid training, helping to ensure that children are cared for appropriately if they have an accident or become unwell. Children are provided with good role models by staff who pay close attention to basic hygiene practices, such as wiping tables with anti-bacterial spray prior to eating. A bowl and sponge are provided on the snack table to encourage children to wipe any spillage that may occur as they independently pour drinks. The premises are maintained to a very high level of cleanliness throughout the day. Nappy changing and disposal routines are hygienic and maintain children's privacy.

Children choose when they would like to have a snack and independently pour their drinks and help themselves to fruit. Some children stay for lunch bringing a packed meal and sitting together with a staff member to enjoy these. This assists children in their transition to main stream schooling and enhances their social interactions. Children's dietary requirements are documented and individual needs met effectively. Fresh drinks are freely available throughout the day. Children's knowledge of healthy eating options and ways in which food is prepared is enhanced through cooking sessions and topic work.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and parents are greeted by staff each morning and the room is prepared prior to children's arrival. The premises are clean, warm and well maintained. Space is organised effectively to provide a wide variety of play opportunities which include table-top activities, carpeted areas, role-play, craft work, mark-making and number areas.

Furniture, toys and equipment are in good repair and checked daily before use. There is a wide range of resources to ensure children are comfortable and can play together or on their own. This enables them to make choices and take responsibility in their play. Children can reach their toys and equipment because they are invitingly stored and arranged on low level units and shelves.

Children's safety is very well maintained and proper precautions are taken to promote safety within the premises. For example, children practise emergency evacuation routines regularly and staff secure the public outside play area when they are using it. The premises are secure and staff are vigilant in ensuring that main doors are locked when children are present. Staff supervise all aspects of children's play very well. Children are assisted in learning about personal

safety through visits to the group from the road safety unit, police and fire brigade. On a day-to-day basis they are encouraged to tuck their chairs in when leaving a table, tidy their toys after use and to hold doors for each other.

The safeguarding children policy clearly outlines the signs and symptoms of abuse and the procedures the nursery would take should they have concerns about a child in their care. This policy is shared with parents at the start of an arrangement and assists in maintaining children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children take part in high quality activities throughout each session. These are planned around an overall theme and those that are adult-led are skilfully differentiated according to each child's ability. Staff's understanding of the youngest children's needs ensures they build on what they know and can already do, whilst excellent free play opportunities and resources enable children to consolidate their understanding. Children under three play well with older children, learning from them to take turns, tidy their play things away and join in with group times. Organisation of play areas encourages and enhances play experiences because it enables children to make choices and develop their ideas in their own way. Their regular use of an extensive range of creative materials including paint, sand, water, craft items and role-play, encourages them to represent their experiences, feelings and ideas in a variety of ways.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of Montessori teaching methods and the Foundation Stage curriculum, effectively linking the two to ensure that all areas of learning are covered and given appropriate and equal emphasis. Observations, assessments and planning are very detailed and used in conjunction with each other to ensure challenges and expectations for each child are appropriate to their stage of learning. Each day offers short adult-led times, one-to-one play with an adult, which is often child-led, and free play opportunities.

Children have a high level of independence, freely selecting resources, tidying them away and taking responsibility for their personal care. They are confident and motivated in their play and are starting to make friendships, for example, a child on arrival sought out her friend and tapped her on the shoulder. The friend looked up from her play and with obvious pleasure found a chair for her to sit on so she could join in with the activity.

Children's understanding of the different aspects of language is excellent. They thoroughly enjoy matching letters of the alphabet and linking these to sounds using actions to support their understanding. Opportunities for children to refine their pencil control, draw and make marks are abundant and consequently, they are becoming confident in writing letters and sometimes their names. The print-rich environment helps children to understand that print has meaning.

Children are skilful in their use of number and recognise numerals, placing the appropriate number of counters next to a number card. They use mathematical language appropriately when describing shapes they are building with or using containers in the water tray, for example, this is 'nearly full' and then 'full'. Children freely explore everyday items and learn through their play with resources which include padlocks and keys, kitchen utensils, computer

programmes and a 'smoothie' maker. This allows them to acquire knowledge of their environment and keeps their play interesting and relevant. Regular visitors to the nursery expand this understanding helping children to become aware of the local community.

Children concentrate for extended periods of time and embrace new activities with interest and enthusiasm, for example, using large tunnels to act out how the digestive tract works, following a group circle time discussion. Staff work diligently to inspire children through their provision of an exciting and motivating range of themed and free-play activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued as individuals and all are warmly welcomed into the nursery each day. Staff are consistent, calm and supportive in all their communications with children, encouraging them to make appropriate decisions, without being demanding. Children receive meaningful praise and encouragement which helps them to learn what is right and wrong for themselves, not just to please the adult involved. They independently tidy-up toys and join in happily with other nursery routines such as group circle times and getting ready to go outside. They behave well, sharing and taking turns with their friends.

Children develop positive attitudes to others through sharing activities and learning about their immediate environment. For example, during the past year they have enjoyed visits from the police, fire service, the road safety unit and a vet. Children begin to appreciate the customs and cultures of others through planned work during the year and play with resources that offer positive images of people living in the wider world. They show concern for themselves and the living things around them as they learn, through themed work, about their bodies, the changing seasons and the natural world. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff demonstrate through discussion and policy documents, a very knowledgeable understanding of how to support children with additional needs, although none currently attend the nursery. All toys and resources are equally accessible to children.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. They are provided with clear and detailed information about daily activities and how they may assist in developing children's understanding of focus areas. A white board offers brief information about the focus of the day with suggestions about how this may be extended at home. Newsletters give specific information about forthcoming topics and the areas that will be covered within each of them. Each term parents either receive a detailed written report or are invited to a one-to-one meeting with staff. Daily informal discussions and regular invites for parents to share their various areas of expertise with the nursery help to ensure they are encouraged and supported in taking an active role in their children's learning. All play areas within the nursery have detailed information books, with photographs, explaining the purpose of each activity area, and the parents' notice board provides information about recent activities, accompanied by photographs.

Parents have recently received questionnaires regarding the nursery and suggestions made in this have since been put into practice. All questionnaires demonstrate extremely strong and positive support for the nursery and the care and learning provided.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the children for whom it provides. Recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for because staff are appropriately trained and support each other in their work. All aspects of documentation are of a good quality. Children's arrival times are recorded, although the times of children who leave part way through the day are not detailed. Policy and procedure documents provide staff and parents with clear information about all aspects of the nursery's organisation. Children's details are stored appropriately to maintain confidentiality and regularly updated with parents. Records of accidents and medications, activities, assessments and anecdotal observations for each child are effectively maintained by staff concerned.

Leadership and management of the nursery is outstanding. The small staff team work exceptionally well together and the owner of the nursery provides strong leadership. Regular meetings and ongoing training provide staff with a firm structure to develop their practice and expertise. In consequence, children's learning is of a consistently high standard and they are making excellent progress from their individual starting points. Systematic coverage of all areas of learning is indicated throughout planning documents and individual assessments. Regular and detailed observations ensure children are assisted to move on from what they know and can do. The nursery has engaged the services of two peripatetic teachers to enhance children's development through dance and music.

The nursery staff demonstrate a very strong and committed belief in the delivery of high quality care and learning for children, using Montessori teaching methods. Recommendations from the last inspection have been successfully addressed and the nursery continues to welcome support from the local authority early years consultant.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery agreed to conduct more rigorous risk assessments and ensure all documentation is kept in line with regulatory requirements. Generally good progress has been made with these recommendations. Detailed risk assessments of all areas and equipment used by children are completed regularly and include daily visual checks and actions taken to reduce identified risks. Children's arrival times are recorded, although departure times part way through the day have yet to be included in the log.

At the last nursery education inspection the nursery agreed to increase children's experience of modern technology, improve paperwork to ensure all areas of the curriculum may be easily tracked and ensure staff interventions promote children's individual thinking and reasoning.

Very good progress has been made with each of these recommendations. Children have daily use of a computer and regular use of other forms of modern technology. Staff intervention with children positively enhances their independence, developing their ability to reason and think for themselves. Planning documents, observations and assessments clearly indicate the areas of learning covered in each activity and the level at which they are delivered to meet individual needs. Direct links are made between Montessori planning documents and the Foundation Stage curriculum, ensuring children's progress is easily tracked.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop children's hand washing routines prior to snack time to ensure their developing awareness of keeping healthy is effectively supported
- ensure full details of children's attendance are recorded

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk